

August 9, 2018

I am writing this letter to let you all know that, as Jack Kupferman has hoped, interning for the Gray Panthers this summer has totally blown my mind.

This past summer, I was fortunate to work with a passionate, “scrappy,” and sincere organization dedicated to combatting ageism locally, nationally, and globally. During my internship search, I did not see many jobs that particularly stood out to me, but Gray Panthers did. Their emphasis on youth and age in action made me consider a perspective that I had not delved into much before, and their mission to dismantle ageism was particularly enticing.

Candidly, I did not discuss ageism in many other spaces before this experience, and I truly regret not having done so before. Age is something that we all have in common, something that is inevitable. Therefore, it is very strange that so many of us—knowingly or unknowingly— perpetuate this stigma, which will eventually be a stigma against ourselves.

This internship was much more than going on coffee runs. I worked directly on a number of projects with collaborators at Yale School of Public Health, the Center for Medicare Advocacy, and the Riverstone Center to name a few. Some of the projects that I worked on include the reformatting and editing of a document on healthcare for older adults—to be used by policy makers and organizations, the fundamentals of an intergenerational education project on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid; the beginnings of an Innovation Lab targeted at innovation for older adults in the world’s developing countries; and a website for Ageism resources. I interviewed individuals like Helen Hamlin, a renowned social worker and advocate, as well as a phenomenal person. Meeting people like Ms. Hamlin show the true nature of advocacy and how fundamental the individual is, and also how dedicated these individuals are.

On top of all of these incredible projects, I also had the privilege to attend the High Level Political Forum as well as the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing at the United Nations—attending sessions, writing policy briefs, and setting up events. It was an amazing experience after working at a grassroots and national level to see how policy and advocacy can also work at the global level. This experience gave me insight that I would have otherwise not had before working with Gray Panthers, and I am honored to have been able to be a part of this process. The various events gave me a clear understanding of why there is a necessity for a global Convention (treaty) negotiated at the UN targeted at protecting the human rights of older persons.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity Jack Kupferman gave me to work with Gray Panthers over the summer. Jack was not only an incredible boss, but also a supportive, kind, and driven individual who I admire and respect. His devotion to Gray Panthers is unparalleled and his commitment to the organization taught me a lot about the importance of having unfettered dedication to a cause. It was such a great opportunity to meet a one of a kind leader like Jack.

Thank you again for this unique opportunity.

Sincerely yours,

Jonathan Berger

Gray Panthers Intern 2018